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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 27, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

SEQUESTRATION WORKDAYS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta states sequestration "would be a disaster in terms of the Defense Department. As far as our budget is concerned, as far as our ability to respond to the threats that are out there, it has a big impact."

Over time, sequestration's disproportionate cuts to national defense will reduce our military to its smallest number of uniformed personnel since before

World War II, its smallest number of operational naval vessels since World War I, and its smallest number of operational aircraft in the history of the United States Air Force.

But national security is not the only sequestration risk. In my home district in north Alabama, President Obama has ordered that roughly 14,000 highly skilled and irreplaceable Department of Defense civilian employees suffer 20 percent furloughs and 20 percent salary cuts.

Redstone Arsenal's engineers, scientists, and other civilian defense staff are critical to national security in a time of international instability. Their knowledge and skill sets are unique, virtually irreplaceable, and may be lost to national security forever if these workers are forced to find work elsewhere.

The damage I've just described to north Alabama's economy is before President Obama starts hammering defense and NASA contractors and many other Tennessee Valley Federal employees who provide worthwhile services to their country.

Nationwide, the economic impact is absolutely staggering. Sequestration risks 1.5 to 2 million job losses, with a resulting 1 percent worsening of America's unemployment rate. It is unwise to subject America's fragile economy to job losses of this magnitude.

For emphasis, and despite White House, Senate leadership, and House leadership efforts to the contrary, I voted against sequestration and the Budget Control Act of 2011, quite frankly, because the risk to America was simply unacceptable. Unfortunately, my vote was in the minority.

In 2012, and despite President Obama's veto threats, the House twice passed legislation to fix sequestration. In response, the Senate not only refused to vote on the House's sequestration solutions, the Senate irresponsibly refused to propose solutions of its own.

Hence, despite the Senate enjoying more than a year and a half to do its job, Senate inaction and delay have given America yet another short-term crisis.

So here we are. America faces three major crises: Sequestration, a continuing resolution to fund the government, and yet another debt ceiling crisis.

While I agree with the House leadership's view that, since the Senate has done nothing to solve this problem, it is appropriate for the Senate to act first on sequestration this time, I am troubled the House is scheduled to work only 24 days in March and April, combined. Conversely, there are 19 workdays in which the House is not in session. Stated differently, the House will only work 56 percent of workdays and be on recess from Washington 44 percent of the time.

The American people work on workdays. Congress should do no less. Actions speak louder than words. Under the circumstances America faces, a part-time Congress is simply unacceptable.

As sequestration unfolds, as national security, Federal Government functions, and the American economy slowly but surely deteriorate, the American people will intensify pressure on HARRY REID's Senate to finally do its job.

Americans are suffering. National defense is suffering. The suffering of Americans is not in recess during this crisis. Congress should not be in recess either.

We signed up to do a job, and that job is not done. The House must provide leadership and prove we are serious about doing the people's business, and Washington is where the people's business is done.

Given the magnitude of the risks and damage done by sequestration to America on a daily basis, I respectfully request that the House remain in session and do our jobs on each and every

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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